

L 29 1982

Subline
Big River file

Summary of Significant Issues

Director, Air and Waste Management Division

John J. Franke, Jr
Regional Administrator

SITE	BIG RIVER MINE
ID#	MOD981126899
BREAK	16
OTHER	AR
7-29-82	
OZCR	

Attached are summaries of three sites currently under the Superfund/
uncontrolled sites program which have received much public and governmental
attention. These summaries are provided for your information in the event
attention to these sites is directed to your office. Please note, both
Vogel and the Big River sites are State-lead, Weldon Springs is a federal
facility that is presently the responsibility of the Department of Energy.

David A. Wagoner
Director, Air and Waste Management Division

Attachment

ARWM/WMBR/SPFD/KBiggs/dh/7/28/82/H52

SPFD	WMBR	DARWM	ARWM
Biggs	Morby	Spratlin	Wagoner
Biggs	Lucy	CH	7/28
7/28/82	7/28/82	H28	G

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SUPERFUND RECORDS

Region VII
Summary of Significant Issues

Date July 15, 1982

Name Lead and Barite Mine Tailings on the Big River

Category Mine tailings

Issue The presence of approximately 50,000 cubic yards of lead tailings in the Big River has degraded the quality of the Big River. Elevated levels of lead in the flesh of sucker fish downstream of the site have been documented. Tailings piles continue to erode into the river. Organic chelating agents from a sanitary landfill operating in the pile may leach the lead and zinc from the tailings and carry them to the Big River. The Big River is a major tributary to the Meramec River which is a water supply for parts of St. Louis.

Significance to EPA Major

Background Lead mine tailings were deposited at the Desloge, Missouri site by St. Joe Minerals Corporation for 29 years, between 1929 and 1958. The site covers approximately 500 acres. The tailings are reportedly 2-4 percent lead and are piled to depths of up to 100 feet inside a horseshoe bend of the Big River.

In 1972, the property was donated by St. Joe Minerals to St. Francois County. The County in turn donated the land to the St. Francois County Environmental Corporation, a non-profit organization, for the purpose of establishing a sanitary landfill on the site.

In 1977, a major washout occurred, reportedly as a result of a blocked drainage structure and neglected maintenance. It is estimated that up to 50,000 cubic yards of lead tailings washed into the Big River. Minor erosion has continued up to the present time adding to the tailings deposited in the River.

In late 1977, EPA/SVAN conducted an intensive survey of the Big River. The general finding was that the Big River was degraded by mine tailings, mainly as a result of physical changes rather than toxicity.

In June 1979, a study was initiated by the University of Missouri to evaluate the present and potential problems of the site and to propose solutions to these problems. Their report was issued in January 1980.

A July 18, 1980, study by the Missouri Department of Conservation reported elevated levels of lead in the flesh of sucker fish downstream from the tailings pile. As a result of these findings, the Missouri Department of Health issued a warning to the public against eating bottom feeding fish in this area.

ARWM/WMBR/SPFD/DMCKinley/dh/7/22/82/J9

SPFD SKM	SPFD	WMBR
McKinley	Biggs	Morby

7/23/82

[Handwritten signature]
7/23/82

Since the occurrence of the washout incident a number of meetings have been held among interested agencies to coordinate mitigation efforts. Up until 1980, enforcement action against St Joe Minerals was considered as the most likely course of action by several of these agencies. The Corps of Engineers (COE) referred the case to the Department of Justice (DOJ) in late 1978. By December, 1981, no action had been taken by the DOJ on this referral. In 1980, the recommendation from EPA/ENFC called for immediate enforcement action under Section 311 of the CWA and Section 7003 of RCRA. The site was recommended for listing as an uncontrolled site by EPA, COE and the Department of Interior suggested the site be considered for potential Superfund action. However, the State requested the site not be listed as an uncontrolled site and has not recommended its inclusion on the National Priority List.

In late 1980, MDNR began negotiating with St Joe Mineral Corporation for voluntary clean-up of the mine tailing site. The final negotiated agreement, Covenant Not to Sue between the St Joe Minerals Company, St Francois Environmental Corporation, State Department of Natural Resources, State Clean Water Commission, State Conservation Commission, and State Attorney General's Office was signed on September 4, 1981. MDNR has had and maintained lead for this site including the negotiated agreement.

EPA Actions EPA has been involved in this situation for quite some time, although only in a subordinate role to MDNR. As a result of the negotiations between MDNR and St Joe Minerals Company, and the fact that mining wastes became excluded from the hazardous waste regulation (November 19, 1980), the Regional Office agreed to suspend further enforcement actions until the results of these negotiations became known. The Agency also agreed, at the request of MDNR, not to include the Desloge Lead Mine Tailings Site on the list of uncontrolled sites.

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